

## **MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES**

July 12, 2010 City Hall, Rm 209, 6:30 p.m.

1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02459

### **Members Present:**

Jane Brown  
Jini Fairley  
Rob Caruso, Co-Chair  
Lucie Chansky  
Jeff Hutter  
Rosemary Larking  
Barbara Lischinsky  
Girard Plante, Co-Chair

### **Staff Present:**

Kathleen Cahill, Community Development Senior Planner  
Amy Yuhasz, Associate Director of Housing and Community Development

### **Public Present:**

Michael Lepie

G. Plante, Co-chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

### **1. Minutes:** Approval of May and June meeting minutes.

A copy of the May and June minutes were distributed to the members of the Mayor's Committee prior to the meeting. J. Brown made a motion to approve the May and June minutes. R. Larking seconded the motion and the Board approved the minutes 7-0-0.

### **2. Discussion.** Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

K. Cahill reiterated the information about the march and gathering in celebration of the anniversary, which is scheduled for Monday, July 26 on Boston Common. K. Cahill also mentioned that she would be creating a display to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA. The display will be up in the City Hall Rotunda from July 26 to July 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **3. Report.** Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Access Projects.

K. Cahill distributed a report on the status of CDBG projects in progress (an electronic copy of this application was also sent via email prior to the meeting). These projects include: Accessible Pedestrian Signals, Charlesbank Playground, Curb Cuts, Retrofitting Curb Cuts, Cold Spring Accessible Route, Nahanton

Accessible Pathway and Handicap Parking Space, and Newton Centre Accessible Pathway and Handicap Parking Spaces.

K. Cahill reported that work on Washington and Commonwealth Avenue has begun. New curb cuts were constructed at the corner of Washington and Commonwealth Avenue where the fire station is located. The traffic signals have also been 'gutted' which means that the internal wiring has been replaced. The City Traffic Engineer, Clint Schuckel will have a better idea of remaining funds in early August or early September. At this time the Mayor's Committee may be asked to weigh in about access priorities at this intersection.

H. Platt reported that the audible pedestrian signals at Langley and Beacon as well as Cabot and Walnut are not working. K. Cahill will report these problems to customer service.

The Committee agreed to examine the curb cut funding at the end of fiscal year 2011, in order evaluate whether or not some funding should be transferred to a different project.

The Committee would support the use of funds from the Accessible Pedestrian Signal project to install APS at Lowell and Washington.

#### **4. Report.** Update on the City's Architectural Access Consultant.

K. Cahill explained that the City has hired a consultant to 'evaluate the City's internal processes used by multiple City departments to review, approve, and monitor the development of, alteration or expansion, and change of use in housing, municipal buildings, streets and sidewalks, park and recreation facilities, and other structures that are used by the public with regard to compliance with applicable federal, state, and local architectural access requirements.' Barbara Chandler, from the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership was contracted as the consultant for this assignment. CDBG administrative funds will be used to fund this contract. Ms. Chandler will be working with City staff, departments and boards and committees, including the Mayor's Committee, in order to understand the current practices and procedures. The end result will be a written plan for a 'comprehensive and integrated system for the City to assure full compliance with all applicable access requirements.' Ms. Chandler is expected to deliver this report in October or November.

#### **5. Discussion.** MCPD Webpage Development.

K. Cahill suggested that the Committee consider making improvements to the current City webpage. She asked if members of the Mayor's Committee would be willing to look at different Disability Commission webpages to identify elements that

the Committee would like to incorporate in their own webpage. Members will report back at the next MCPD meeting.

## **6. Other Business.**

Michael Lepie submitted a letter with attachments to the Mayor's Committee concerning Citizens for Affordable Housing in Newton Development Organization (CAN-DO's) Veteran House project. The project is the rehabilitation of an existing two-family house which will target chronically homeless veterans with families. Both Community Development Block Grant funds and Community Preservation funds have been committed to Veteran House. Michael Lepie stated that the project will not be wheelchair accessible. Federal and state accessibility requirements only require that CAN-DO have a reasonable accommodation/reasonable modification policy which will establish the process for a tenant requiring accessibility modifications/accommodations in order to live in the house. The policy also states that if the tenant's request constitutes an undue financial burden for the developer, CAN-DO, the request may be denied. Mr. Lepie commented that the driveway leading up to the residence from Commonwealth Avenue is very steep. The Committee members wondered why CAN-DO selected a site that did not lend itself to accessibility.

The Committee requested information on the number/percentage of CAN-DO's units that are wheelchair accessible.

The Committee decided to invite both Josephine McNeil to the next Mayor's Committee meeting. In addition, G. Plante will draft a memo to the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen describing the Mayor's Committee's concern over the lack of accessibility at Veteran House and requesting a moratorium on funding until the Committee learns more about the project.

J. Fairley requested that K.Cahill contact the Department of Public Works about the water/sewer work that is being completed throughout the City. Currently, there are few if any signs or blockades alerting persons with low vision to this repair work.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.